

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4172

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AS

SUBJECT: LABOR VOTE DROPS SHARPLY IN AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY ELECTIONS

REF: SYDNEY 2039

1. IN ELECTIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SEPT 28, LABOR SHARE OF VOTE DROPPED  
TO 24 PERCENT, COMPARED TO 30 PERCENT IN SIMILAR ELEC-  
TIONS FOR ACT ADVISORY COUNCIL HELD IN 1970. LIBERAL  
PARTY VOTE, BY CONTRAST, WAS 16.2 PERCENT, COMPARED TO  
13.5 PERCENT IN 1970. COUNTRY PARTY DID NOT PRESENT  
CANDIDATES. DLP GOT ABOUT 1.5 PERCENT OF VOTE. BULK  
OF VOTE WENT TO INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES, AS IN 1970.

2. VOTING WAS COMPULSORY, IN CONTRAST TO NEW SOUTH  
WALES LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELECTIONS OF SEPT 21 (REFTEL),  
BUT ONLY 85 PERCENT OF REGISTERED ELECTORS VOTED.  
INFORMAL (INVALID) BALLOTS WERE RELATIVELY HIGH AT  
7 PERCENT, AND PRESS SUGGESTED THAT INVALID VOTE  
TOTAL MAY HAVE BEEN DELIBERATE. (IN AVERAGE NATIONAL  
ELECTION, INVALID VOTE FIGURE USUALLY LESS THAN 3 PERCENT.)

3. TOO MUCH SHOULD NOT BE MADE OF ACT ELECTION. IN  
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FIRST PLACE, THIS IS FIRST ELECTION FOR 18-MEMBER LEGIS-

LATIVE ASSEMBLY, BUT ITS POWERS ARE NO GREATER THAN ADVISORY COUNCIL IT REPLACES. IT WOULD BE ERROR TO EXTRAPOLATE VOTING PERCENTAGES DIRECTLY TO NATIONAL LEVEL, AS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA TEND TO POLL VERY WELL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, BUT VERY POORLY IN STATE AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

4. HOWEVER, SOME 85,000 ELECTORS VOTED IN THIS ELECTION, AND SAMPLE IS VERY MUCH LARGER THAN 2000 OR SO CONTACTED FOR NATIONAL POLLING ORGANIZATIONS. MEDIA HAS UNIVERSALLY REPORTED RESULTS AS BLOW TO LABOR, PARTICULARLY AS ACT VOTERS HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE PRO-ALP THAN VOTERS NATIONALLY. AT MAY, 1974, ELECTIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, LABOR CANDIDATES WON TWO ACT SEATS WITH MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF VOTE IN EACH CASE.

5. UNDERLINING ALP CONCERN AT OUTCOME WAS COMMENT OF GORDON BRYANT, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR ACT, WHO COMMENTED TO PRESS SEPT 29 THAT HE WAS PUZZLED AT ACT ELECTION RESULTS. HE SAID, "I DO NOT KNOW THAT YOU CAN INTERPRET IT AS A VOTE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, THOUGH IT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT A FAVORABLE VOTE BY A LONG SHOT. EVEN THE LIBERALS HAVE NOT GOT THAT MANY VOTES. I CANNOT SEE WHY THE PEOPLE OF CANBERRA ARE ANTI THE GOVERNMENT."

6. COMMENT: ACT RESULTS SHOULD BE SEEN AS ESSENTIALLY CONFIRMING TREND UNFAVORABLE TO LABOR AS REFLECTED IN NATIONAL POLLS SINCE AUGUST AND IN NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (REFTEL).  
GREEN

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